

5C

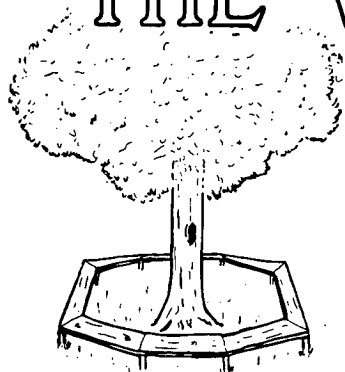
THE WHITTLERS BENCH

SOUTHPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

501 NORTH ATLANTIC • SOUTHPORT, NORTH CAROLINA 28461
AVENUE

VOLUME XVIII, NUMBER 5

SEPT. 1994



REGULAR MEETING: The Program Chairman and the Executive Board are delighted to announce that our speaker for the September meeting is to be Dr. Thomas Loftfield, Professor of Anthropology at N. C. University at Wilmington. For several years now, Dr. Loftfield and his students have been "rediscovering" Charles

Towne, N. C., a colony that thrived along the Cape Fear River bank some 350 years ago in Brunswick County in the vicinity of what we now know as Olde Towne. Dr. Loftfield and some of his students spent part of this past summer in Barbados where many of the Charles Towne settlers had lived before coming to the Cape Fear. You simply must come out and hear what Dr. Loftfield has to say about the settlement and why it failed. The meeting will be on Sept. 22, at 7:30 P. M. in the multi-purpose meeting room of the Southport Maritime Museum. Thanks to Mary Strickland, Director, for making the room available to us. Hope to see ALL OF YOU there.

RAFFLE TICKETS: Sales of the raffle tickets have slowed to a standstill. Let's do something about it. Briefly, the details of this project are: Bill Reaves, a charter member of the Historical Society, author of our two-volume Southport Chronology, area historian and frequent contributor to Whittlers Bench, gave the Society a beautiful set of Franciscan Ware dishes in the Ivy pattern which had belonged to his parents, now deceased. The set includes service for eight and several serving pieces. The set, if purchased today, would cost \$500.00 or more. Bill gave us the dishes to raffle as a way of raising money for the continued publication of our newsletter, with the hope also that one day it might be expanded into a better format. And, with postage rates due to rise soon, we will need additional money for that.

So, please see or call Pauline Swain, Chairman, and get some tickets to sell - or buy a few. Remember Thanksgiving and Christmas and what a lovely table you could set with the dishes. And what a nice wedding gift it would be. If you live out of town you may call or write someone to pick up the tickets for you. In fact, we'd even accept a donation for Whittlers Bench!

JOSHUA POTTS MEMORIAL: We've had very, very few replies to our request for your suggestions about a Joshua Potts Memorial. Don't you want to honor the Founder of Old Smithville? Write a card or letter to 501 North Atlantic Avenue, Southport, N. C. 28461, and give your suggestion. A telephone call is not enough; we need your suggestion in writing.

FOUNDERS DAY: Plans for Founders Day on October 8 will soon be finalized. We need to hear from you about this, too. We hope you are planning to attend. Since we will be serving a meal, we can't just wait to see how many will drop in to eat. We must know in advance.

"Looking Back" — The History Page

Susan Carson, Editor



(continued from Page 1)

JOSHUA'S DREAM OUTSELLS THE LION KING! When the last copy of Joshua's Dream was sold by the Little Professor Book Center on Saturday, Sept. 3, it had beat out The Lion King as the season's best seller there. Mr. and Mrs. Jan Calhoun purchased Copy #1000, the last copy of the first printing of Joshua's Dream. Mr. and Mrs. Calhoun are new residents of the area, living at St. James Plantation. We are glad that people are interested in Southport's history.

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED: Bill Reaves is working steadily on Volume III of the Southport Chronology. The period to be covered is 1920 through 1960. He needs us to help him in determining events of the period of 1920-1929 that should appear in Volume III. Please talk to members of your family and let us know events that should be covered such as political events, births, deaths, weddings, building of houses, events at the Southport churches, etc. You may also send this to the Society's address as given on the foregoing page. It would be nice to have a volunteer to copy information from old City minutes, church histories and newspapers on microfilm. How about it?

PRETTY TRIBUTE TO A BRAVE WOMAN (Wilmington Evening Dispatch 11/9/14)

A Clyde Line steamer never passes Southport that it does not blow a salute for Miss Kate Stuart, the greatly beloved and admired proprietress of the Stuart House, and Miss Kate, as she is affectionately known, always answers greeting, with her handkerchief in the daytime and with lantern at night. No doubt many passengers on the steamer, as well as many Southport people, who have witnessed the courtesy have wondered as to the origin of this pretty custom.

Last week's SOUTHPORT NEWS gives a very interesting account of the origin of the custom. The article, which will doubtless be read with a great deal of interest, is as follows:

Many persons have been standing along the waterfront at times when Clyde steamers have been passing and have heard the salute that is always blown when the boat is passing the Stuart House, and have seen Miss Kate Stuart, that noble woman who presides over the well-known hostelry, come out on the porch and wave her handkerchief in acknowledgment of the salute, and then the onlooker would wonder what it all meant.

There are many in Southport who have heard the story in connection with this tribute of the steamers to Miss Kate and the story was told to a NEWS man in such a way and from such a source that it was up to him to investigate and find out just the cause. Consequently a visit was made to the Stuart House and Miss Kate was asked about the blowing of the salute.

She was reluctant to tell the story but in a modest way showed a fine gold watch which she had carried for many years and which when opened revealed the inscription:

From Alex. Hunter to Miss Kate Stuart for her
bravery in saving the life of his daughter

Mary, July 31st, 1869.

Close questioning brought out the fact that at the time mentioned Captain Hunter, who was with the Clyde Line, was compelled to go to New York on business and allowed his daughter, Miss Mary, to remain in the care of Miss Kate who was at that time running the hotel there. On the afternoon of July 31st the girl strayed away from the house and was soon playing around the pier at the waterfront. Miss Kate was in the house and all of a sudden she heard screams coming from the pier and rushing out found that Miss Mary had fallen into the water and was in a fair way to drown. Miss Kate, being an excellent swimmer, jumped in after the girl and although there was a hard tide to battle she managed by almost superhuman effort to go from piling to piling with the unconscious girl in her arms until others came down to the pier and assisted them out of the water.

The girl was in a serious condition for some days after her accident but through careful nursing on the part of Miss Kate she pulled through and a short time after she went to her home the good hotel lady was the recipient of the watch she now esteems as one of her greatest treasures.

Thus the story of the salute of the Clyde Line steamers to Miss Kate is explained. It is made every time one of the boats pass this landing and many times the wheels have stopped until Miss Kate has come from the house and answered with her wave of the kerchief. The story is a pretty one and the tribute of regard for Miss Stuart is pathetic, inasmuch as it is the tribute of brave men to a brave woman and one whom it is a delight to know and whom all revere and respect. Miss Kate Stuart is a citizen everyone in Southport is proud of and one who has grown to be an object of love to every man, woman and child in this and other parts who know her."

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: You have perhaps heard other versions of this story, because it has been told many times by many people. However, it would seem that an interview with Miss Kate would record the story of the "one who was there". The Editor is indebted to Bill Reaves for this clipping from the Wilmington Evening Dispatch of November 9, 1914. At the time of the interview, Miss Kate was 70 years old. She lived until April 13, 1929.

There are many other stories to tell about Miss Kate, who became known as The Heroine of Smithville because of the story told above. Later issues of Whittlers Bench will carry some of them.